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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the function of cases and case methods in teacher education and professional development, hypothesizing that educators and administrators can better make sense of educational standards and link them to their daily school and classroom lives if they can identify cases in which those standards are inherent. One National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching (NPEAT) partner used the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) principles as a framework for analyzing both cases and personal experience, emphasizing teachers who grapple with classroom dilemmas with no easy answers. Over 2 years, the project applied case methods to support new and veteran teachers in learning to bridge the gap between the abstract principles embedded in teaching standards and classroom teaching realities. Participants analyzed how INTASC standards interacted with dilemmas and practices portrayed in various case narratives describing the realities of teachers' classroom lives. They collaborated with NPEAT partners and other educators to develop new cases representing domains of practice covered by standards for which no clarifying cases yet existed and to expand the cadre of teacher educators and staff developers who could effectively use standards-based case teaching practices through a series of training institutes and an interactive Web site. A draft casebook was also developed. (Contains 7 references.) (SM)

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Case Methods as a Bridge between Standards and Classroom Practice

Judith H. Shulman, WestEd

In a world of standards-based school reform, what are the functions of cases and case methods for teacher education and professional development? The working hypothesis of this project was that teachers, administrators and other local educators will be able to make sense of educational standards, and link them to their daily school and classroom lives, if we can identify (or construct) cases in which those standards are inherent. A standard is very much like a *theoretical principle*. It describes how teachers ought to operate in general and for the most part, without reference to the particulars of person, context, clock or calendar. The power of a standard is its broad generality, which is also its Achilles heel. A standard is to the policymaker what a theoretical principle is to a scientist.

Teachers are not, by nature, either theoreticians or policymakers. They do not inhabit the universe in general; like most other professional practitioners, they operate in a world of particulars. Teachers function in a world of specific classrooms, particular pupils and the routines that make the daily life of the school manageable. Teachers tend to design their days and weeks in terms of particular activities, specific subject-matter content and the trials and tribulations of particular youngsters. Thus, when the individual practitioner, or even a group of teachers, confronts a set of educational standards, he or she encounters a remote abstraction, quite difficult to link to the familiar world of practice.

How then are educators committed to a standards-based reform strategy likely to assist teachers in connecting the prosaic elements of classroom and teacherly life to the broad generalizations of standards? Teachers are like many other professional practitioners. Ask a physician about her work and she will more likely tell you the story of her most interesting case than regale you with a theoretical exposition. Inquire similarly of an attorney, and the most

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challenging case he litigated during the past month will spring to mind. Professionals parse the world of practice using the language of *cases*. Why cases? Because a case is not merely any old story. A case is a singular species of narrative, a story with point. When the case has a moral or ethical point, we often call it a parable. When it makes a legal point, or a medical point, it can be used by physicians or by lawyers to connect particular events and situations to more general principles, theories or standards. A story becomes a case when it is a "case of something" and it becomes connected to more general principles, policies or values.

The power of cases for school reform lies in their capacity to create bridges across the great chasm that divides policy from practice. A case is situated between the general power of standards and the rich detail of specific practical situations. By using cases to illustrate standards, or by using standards to illuminate cases, we create a web of meanings and associations between the two worlds. By engaging teachers and other educators in analytic discussions around such cases, in which they create linkages between cases and standards on the one hand, and between cases and their own local work on the other hand, educators become increasingly capable of adapting their work using the "north star" of standards to guide their pedagogical navigations.

During the last decade, several educators have viewed case-based pedagogy as one of the most promising reforms in teacher education and professional development (e.g., L. Shulman, 1987; Doyle, 1990; Sykes & Bird, 1992; Hutchings, 1993; Merseth, 1996). Staff at WestEd (formerly Far West Laboratory) have been active participants in this reform effort, developing practitioner-written casebooks, leading case discussions, conducting facilitator seminars, and studying what participants learned from these activities (see references for a sample of edited books, casebooks, and articles). Our experience and research suggests that case methods—when used appropriately—can help teachers bridge theory and practice, spot issues and frame problems in ambiguous situations, interpret situations from multiple perspectives, identify crucial decision points and possibilities for action, recognize potential risks and benefits inherent in any course of action, and identify and test teaching principles in real classroom situations. In short, cases and

case discussions can help teachers develop flexibly powerful pedagogical understanding and judgment (L. Shulman, 1996).

As an NPEAT partner, we added a new dimension to this work: using the INTASC principles as a framework for analyzing both the cases and personal experience. Unlike the professional development materials that INTASC currently provides, which offer vignettes that illustrate how teachers *demonstrate competence* on the standards (see draft INTASC document on math standards), our focus is on teachers who grapple with classrooms dilemmas that have no easy answers. What becomes clear in case discussions with teachers, is that principles of practice often collide when searching for the appropriate strategy for *these students* in a *this situation* and *a this set of concerns*.

Particulars of the NPEAT Project

This development and dissemination project applied case methods to support new and veteran teachers as they learn to bridge the gap between the abstract principles embedded in the teaching standards and the particular world of practice they encounter in their classrooms. The project proposal began with an analysis of the INTASC standards as statements of excellent teaching knowledge and performance for new teachers. We analyzed how these standards interact with dilemmas and practices portrayed in a sample of case narratives, which describe the realities of teachers' classroom lives. We then proposed to: (a) collaborate with NPEAT partners and other educators to develop new cases that represent domains of practice covered by standards for which no clarifying cases yet exist, paying particular attention to how the INTASC standards ought to frame the discussion materials that accompany each case; and (b) expand the cadre of teacher educators and staff developers who can effectively use standards-based case teaching practices through a series of training institutes and an interactive Web site that presents new cases and other pertinent information. We also planned to evaluate the impact of this work, examining how case analysis influences teachers' understanding of standards and how this understanding contributes to teachers' classroom practices.

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The project was cancelled after the first year, but we received reduced funds through the second year to continue part of the project because of previous commitments. During the two years of funding we were able to accomplish many things. First, we developed an index of INTASC standards that were aligned to four existing casebooks, co-edited by the project PI, Judith Shulman, and placed the index on a Web site (www.wested.org/icd (Institute for Case Development) for other NPEAT partners to use. We also expanded the cadre of educators who can use standards-based case methods by developing a series of training institutes and presenting them in conjunction with major annual meetings (e.g., American Educational Research Association, Association of Teacher Educators, American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education and the National Staff Development Council). Finally, we developed a draft casebook, *Using Assessments in Teaching for Understanding: A Casebook for Educators* (J. Shulman, A. Whittaker, & M. Lew, editors), in collaboration with teachers from two Bay Area teacher networks. The decision to focus on standards-based assessment was decided after reviewing the literature and finding a gap in the existing case literature on assessment. With funds from other sources, we are currently revising the casebook and developing a facilitator's guide. The book will be published by Teachers College Press in 2001.

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